

Report Inter County Team Event for the Kelly Memorial Shield 2018.

On Saturday 14th April, Dove Valley Working Gundog Club entered an invited team of Labrador Retrievers and Handlers to represent them in the Inter Counties Team Event for the Kelly Memorial Shield by kind permission of Mr Richard Benyon, MP at Mayridge Farm, The Englefield Estate, Berkshire.

Judges for the day were Mr Alan Buckland, Mr Colin Pelham, Mr John Stubbs and Mr Barry Taylor.

The event was organised and hosted by the Kennet Valley Gundog Training Society under the guidance of Barbara Kuen, keeper David Wiggins, chief steward Coral Meakes and a team of helpers.

Dove Valley was represented by Northglen Crumble handled by Stewart North, Maderablanca Amarillo handled by Stephen Le Voi and Hollowgate Red Flush of Moorarch, handled by Lewis Butler.

The event comprised of 4 tests in the morning and 2 tests in the afternoon. The proceedings were initially delayed due to low lying fog which cleared mid-morning to allow bright sunshine and a temperature of 19 degrees.

A total of 15 teams, mostly from the South of England, with the exception of the Yorkshire Gundog Club and The Dukeries Gundog Club who travelled the furthest distance to enjoy the day.

Immigration control was not perfect as they allowed a Welsh presence of Jamie Bettinson to sneak in under the Chiltern umbrella! Jamie came with his minder and support crew which added some character to the day!

We started on Test 4 under Colin Pelham which was 3 individual marked retrieves at some distance into light cover uphill, over a drilled field scoring 16, 18 & 17 out of 60. The team was encouraged with the judge stating that we had the best average after 4 teams.

Test 3 under Alan Buckland was 3 blinds at some distance over a track and small ditch into woodland. We could nominate a retrieve for the individual handler and we scored 18, 19 & 19 out of 60. Stephen Le Voi did an exceptional retrieve on the most difficult of the 3 blinds.

Test 2 under Barry Taylor was a mark and a blind where the blind needed to be picked first and was positioned at a shorter distance in a ditch at an acute angle from the mark down a slope entering woodland. These retrieves proved a little more difficult for us resulting in scores of 10, 16 & 14 out of 60.

Test 1 and the final test of the morning under John Stubs was a picking up exercise to retrieve 6 blinds at varying distances and angles in light cover over a small ditch and undulating ground. Our scores lifted our sprits after Test 2 with 17, 17 & 19 out of 60.

Lunch Time (Scores not known at the time)

After 45 dogs completed 4 tests, the team with highest score of 219 points was the Chiltern Gundog Society, and the lowest team score was 157 points. We had 200 points placing us in 9th position on the leader board out of 15 teams. Little did we know that only 7 points separated us from the top 4 teams. We felt reasonably happy with our performance with another 40 points to play for in the afternoon.

Test 6 under Colin Pelham was a marked retrieve on water with 2 other blinds on the water both at acute angles from the mark albeit shorter distances. Our scores of 17, 15 & 15 reflected the judges requirement that the dogs should swim back rather than come around the bank.

Test 7 under the remaining 3 Judges was a walk up with 3 individual marked retrieves. Our scores of 19, 18 & 0 were disappointing for the team after such a consistent performance.

Despite the obvious disappointment on our very last retrieve, we had a very enjoyable day, the atmosphere was wonderful, the tests very challenging, the judging was excellent and the organisation and team of helpers did an exceptional job.

We were all very proud to wear the new Dove Valley silk ties and pleased to represent one of the finest Working Gundog Clubs in England.

Stewart North